1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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the vengeance of the gods? Was it conscience? Was it morality? Was it destiny? Was it all of these, traditionalized into one abstract philosophical concept which, for the average Bush Negro, was no more formulated than are the underlying sanctions of any civilization to the vast majority of people who live in it? We sought out Bayo again, Bayo, who had the great kunu, to see what light his own experience would shed.

"Almost everyone has some kind of kunu, Bayo," we said. "Now why is it that Sedefo, who has a kunu, is so careful, while you who, let us say, also have a kunu, seem not to take any notice?"

We had, as a matter of fact, often wondered about this. Why was Bayo so sure on the river? Why did he carry himself like a man so much older than he really was? What was behind his great self-confidence? Was it luck? Was it a temperamental carelessness? We had watched his amazing strength in taking up our boat almost singly through the rapids, for Bibifo was so old that when he tried to hold the boat in the current, his arm could give no steadying power to the paddle, and the pole-stick he was too old to use at all. Was it all his luck? Our luck?

He answered circumspectly. Let us suppose, he explained, that in making him his father and mother had incurred the greatest kunu of all—the kunu that comes from incest. Now, in that case, he, as a child of such a relationship would be a *gowi*, a "child of the earth," for he would belong twofold to the land which was in the possession of his clan, and thus would be doubly a clan member. He would, therefore, be protected by the spirits. For the gods, it appeared, declared a truce with the child of such a union and gave him a pass of free conduct among the world of spirits. But the children of a man such as this . . . but here he stopped.

"You know," he said, with his delightful smile, "A man who has a kunu like that doesn't talk about it. Kunu aren't talked about. He might not get a wife. . . . "

Herskovits & Herskovits B-5 (1958-1959) 1934
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REBEL DESTINY

6

Fa'aku was chief of his clan. He was a handsome man, with a quick, clever eye, and a reputation for great honesty everywhere on the river. To him we appealed for more light on kunu. We had met him in his village on our way upstream and we had seen him in the tribal council house when we had sat at the great krutu held there by Granman Yankuso. When we stopped again at Fa'aku's village on our way down the river—this village that was so close to Dahomey, the seat of magic—it was evident that the gods favored us. We had come safely through the great rapids. We had stayed at Asindopo Lantiwe in good health, and the spirits had even spoken for us through some of the women whom they had possessed. Fa'aku spoke with greater freedom than we had yet met with.

"There are different kinds of kunu, and some are big and are very bad; but some are small and do not make much trouble," he began.

The greatest kunu came from making a child with a member of one's own family, with one's true, true sister or, what would be almost as bad, with a child of one's mother's sister. Murder was a great kunu, too, and perhaps next to that was the kunu that came to the Bush Negro if he informed to the white man against one of his own kind. Then there were the kunu that one got for false accusation, and for repeated stealing, and even for lying, if it were done too much. For lying is not good, lying makes too much trouble among people. And there were many more kinds of kunu, some of which he mentioned. Killing a snake or a tiger and not burying it with honor brought on a kunu, and cutting down a silk-cotton tree was kunu.

When a big kunu came into a family, it wiped it out. One by one the members of the family died. Men died, women died, and children were never born, or they died when they were small. "This goes on until the family is finished," Fa'aku said. A lesser kunu could kill as well, but its vengeance would be directed only against the women who carried on the line of succession to office and property, or

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613 571 Thus the lo appears to us above all as a social and political unit, based in principle on matrilineal relationship but easily able to welcome heterogeneous elements. It is the framework by means of which the individual is integrated into the collectivity.

614 Functions of the lineage (bee).

—Members of the same bee form a joint group from the legal point of view, even if they do not live in the same village and are under different authorities. They recognize a common legal responsibility; for example, they are obliged, at least in principle, to pay the debts contracted by one of them. Reciprocally, the inheritance of one of them is shared among them all.

614 784 —They have the same religious responsibility, that is, they are subject to the same kunu. The kunu is a curse called down upon a group by a divinity since an ancient era. It is transmitted exclusively by the mother. We shall show in the remainder of this work the considerable importance of this notion in the social life of the Refugee Blacks.

614 —They cannot (at least in principle) contract a union with one another. The bee thus constitutes in principle the unit subject to the law of exogamy.

[735] An offense against exogamy, pikadu, incest in the wide sense, is regarded as very grave.

613 Functions of the lo: The lo transposes onto the material plane the legal principles resulting from the conception of the lineage: joint rights over land, common legal responsibility. Each of them forms a social unit in principle sufficient unto itself, possessing an ancestor worship peculiar to it, a head acting the role of ancestor priest and judge, materially grouped in one village, enjoying exclusive rights over a well-defined unit.

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[584] [588] [984] This prohibition is of a purely religious nature and does not entail any social sanctions; those concerned are convinced that in such a case a suprahuman sanction would strike them in the form of sickness or accident.

[582] [613] Prohibitions limiting marriage. Outside of the great interdiction, pikadu, which is attached to unions within one matrilineage and one patrilineage, two prohibitions limiting marriage are found among the Refugee Blacks, which they express thus:

[595] [589] --I cannot have two wives at the same time in the same lineage. For example I am forbidden to marry two "sisters" at the same time, but if I break with my wife, I may marry her classificatory "sister" or any other woman of the same lineage;

[835] [589] --I may not have relations, even passing ones, with a woman who has been married to my brother by the same mother; in particular, if my brother has just died, I shall not be able to marry his widow.

The Boni are not capable of explaining the deep reasons for these interdictions, but they interpret them as purely social and not religious prohibitions. The offender is simply threatened [584] with being beaten.

[171] The fuss of these rules seems very widely accepted in Black Africa, as much in patrilineal societies as in a matrilineal system.

[171] The second of these rules is characteristic in the Akan (Agni, Baoulé) culture area and shows that the family custom of the Refugee Blacks is related much more directly to that of the Agni-Ashanti group than to that of the Dahomey.

[184] [539] [114] One can note that this rule is exactly contrary to the Saramaka custom, which obliges the widow to marry one of the brothers of the dead man; this custom has been interpreted by several authors as coming from imitation of the levirate of the Jews, with which certain rebels were acquainted (it is known that among the slaveowners there were many Jews).